

Our nation has more than 3 million disabled men and women who wore the uniform, but they have no memorial in our capital to recognize the sacrifices they have made for our country. However, in the last two days we have made great strides in giving our disabled veterans the recognition that they deserve.

Last night, the U.S. Senate passed H.R. 995, the Hare-Kirk bill, which extends the authorization of the American Veterans Disabled for Life Memorial through 2015.

This legislation will give the American Veterans Disabled for Life Foundation more time to raise the money needed to build a memorial. The House passed the bill last March by a vote of 390-0.

I am very pleased that today, President Bush signed this legislation into law.

Commanding an impressive two-acre site within full view of the U.S. Capitol, the memorial will be located adjacent to the National Mall, and across Independence Avenue from the U.S. Botanic Garden, at Washington Avenue (Canal Street) and Second Street, SW. It will be the nation's first physical tribute specifically honoring America's 3 million living disabled veterans and the countless thousands who have since died.

Earlier this year I joined with Rep. Dennis Moore (D-KS) in introducing legislation to authorize the minting of commemorative coins to help raise money for this cause. No federal funds will be used to build the disabled veterans memorial, but it is appropriate for Congress to do all it can to support and encourage its construction. In May this bill passed the House by a vote of 416-0.

Sgt. Bryan Anderson of Rolling Meadows is one of the 3 million reasons why we need to build this memorial. Bryan's story is, unfortunately, all too common for our soldiers in Iraq. But his spirit is uncommon, and his attitude sets him apart from the average person. Bryan lost both legs and an arm to a roadside bomb in Iraq. He jokes that he would have lost both arms if he hadn't been smoking when the bomb detonated. His sense of humor and determination are clearly apparent in the interview he gave Esquire Magazine in January. In it, he said "this doesn't define me. It may be how I look on the outside, but it's not who I am. I guess you could remember me easily as being a triple amputee, but it's not who I am, has nothing to do with who I am. I've always been the same person."

Bryan is one of the biggest champions for the American Disabled Veterans for Life Memorial. Despite the challenges he has faced, he remains one of the most genuine and good-natured people I have ever met. We need to honor those, like Bryan, who have given nearly everything in service to our nation. I look forward to joining Bryan at the dedication ceremony once we have accomplished this important task.

You can read more about the memorial at the American Disabled Veterans for Life [Web site](#) .